# Engaging People, Linking the World –
## *Broadband Planning Activities Update Report*

The Nebraska Information Technology Commission Community Council (NITC), University of Nebraska - Lincoln (UNL), Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED) and the AIM Institute are cooperatively leading the effort to address the broadband planning needs of Nebraska's communities. The update is focused around the three project areas – Capacity Building, Technical Assistance and Regional Planning.

**Capacity Building** - *$715,538 Direct; $885,417 Total*
This project will benchmark technology use across relevant community sectors; set goals for improved technology use within each sector; and develop a plan for achieving its goals, with specific recommendations for web-based application development and demand creation. Projects include:

- ***Internet Connectivity and Use in Nebraska: Household Survey*** UNL. Nebraskans were surveyed about their computer and Internet usage, challenges and desires for the future. *Status*: 6600 Nebraskans surveyed in February 2010 – 47% response rate. Survey results are available at broadband.nebraska.gov. Follow-up survey will be conducted in 2014 that will over sample unserved or underserved populations that were identified in initial survey. Began reviewing initial survey in Q4 for additional benchmarks and exploring questions to add to follow-up Household survey.

- ***Business Survey*** DED. Businesses will be surveyed through the Business Retention and Expansion process to identify the strengths and challenges they face in utilizing technology. *Status:* Businesses continue to be surveyed using DED's BR&E program. Data has been gathered from over 400 key businesses. Sixteen communities currently hold a licenses to input data in eSynchronist. Survey instrument is completed. Exploring ways to increase interest in survey completion. Efforts include working with Michael Curri to assist in making survey results personal to the business and economic developer.

- ***Inventory of Broadband and Digital Literacy Programs*** UNL. In order to identify potential partners and to avoid duplication of efforts, an inventory of broadband and digital literacy programs will be conducted. *Status:* Explore potential new effort to share information through Nebraska Library Commission. Continue to update information located on Web site.

- ***Focused Surveys*** UNL. Focused surveys will be conducted in underserved areas including reservations, North and South Omaha, North Central Nebraska. In addition, limited monies are available to provide analysis of data for communities that wish to look further at their community. *Status:* The North Central Regional Planning team has determined not to conduct a more in-depth survey. Continue to explore conducting other surveys.

- ***Government and Economic Developer Survey*** UNL. Surveys will gather information on access, adoption, usage and technical assistance needs of all county and community governments, chambers of commerce and economic developers, and explore technology usage. *Status:* Surveys conducted with Nebraska Economic Development Association, Nebraska Association of County Officials, and the League of Nebraska Municipalities. Surveys looked at how organizations are currently using technology and their perceptions. Resources, including people and money, are perceived as a challenge in further broadband adoption. Many have limited budgets to upgrade computers, training or purchasing high speed internet.

Broadband Planning Update to Nebraska Public Service Commission, 1-23-2012 (Revised)

Initial conversations at the League and NEDA statewide meetings, confirm importance of broadband. Best practices identified in NEDA survey include the importance of collaboration and setting priorities. NEDA also indicated a desire to meet with Public Service Commissioners. Reviewing survey results identifying benchmarks for regional plans and exploring questions that would like to follow-up. Follow up meetings will be held with organizations in Q1 2013. Planning team members had booth at the NACO annual meeting creating further interest in project. Community economic developers have contacted team to explore how to work within individual communities.

- **Creating Broadband Plan/Administrative UNL.** Regional technology plans as well as a statewide report and recommendations will be created through project. *Status:* Three Public Service Announcements released in Q4 2012 to increase awareness and usage of Nebraska Broadband Map functions. In addition, promotional materials primarily for UNL Extension were developed to promote testing and usage of the Nebraska Broadband Map features. In response to requests from regional teams, developed informational videos on broadband terminology and BroadMap usage.

**Technical Assistance** - *$1,064,471 Direct; $1,193,068 Total*
The Nebraska Broadband Technical Assistance Program will provide technical assistance on supporting entrepreneurs through technology, and other topics to local governments, chambers of commerce, and economic developers especially in areas with lower than average broadband subscribership. Projects include:

- **Statewide Conference AIM Institute.** Conduct Statewide Conference focused on broadband adoption and utilization. *Status.* Nearly 300 people attended the 2nd annual Broadband Connecting Nebraska Conference held October 2, 2012. Keynote speaker Vint Cerf shared a thought-provoking speech to attendees including over 100 high schools that traced the history, assessed the present and looked to the future of the internet. Date and location for the 2013 conference (October 16-17 in Kearney, Nebraska) have been finalized, and planning is underway.
- **Regional Workshops UNL.** Regional Workshops will be held to address specific issues related to an area on broadband adoption and utilization. *Status:* Regional groups are beginning to explore holding workshops during 2013.
- **Webinars UNL.** Up to four webinars will be held each year of the grant to address broadband adoption and utilization. *Status:* Webinar series that started in November focused on, "Don't Know...What I Don't Know." The three part series will feature cloud computing, security concerns and utilizing mobile. The overall format has been modified to highlight video examples of the topic followed by reactions. Don Gray and Gene Hand shared reactions in the December webinar introducing the series.
- **Best Practice Videos UNL/AIM Institute.** At least 20 examples of best practices in expanding broadband adoption across Nebraska will be highlighted. *Status:* Launched one additional business best practice video in Q4, Fred Lockwood and Company CPA, was launched in December. The CPA firm has recognized a positive return on investment by using broadband. For example, productivity has increased over the last five years. The final eight AIM Institute videos were produced during Q4 and will be launched beginning in Q1 2013. UNL has identified additional topics for videos.

- **Entrepreneur Acceleration System (EAS)** *DED*. An entrepreneurial mentoring program will focus on the human capital of the founders and their core teams that includes addressing how broadband can help strengthen entrepreneurs in the state. *Status*: 160 companies and 746 managers worked with 45 guides during 2012 pilot program. Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman delivered a keynote address for the close of the 2012 session and recognized efforts were making a difference. Planning is underway to continue the program.
- **Technical Assistance Expertise** *UNL/Steering Team*. The focus of this effort will be to provide technical assistance in the area of business and entrepreneurism to chambers of commerce, economic developers, and local and county stakeholders statewide and regionally to increase broadband adoption. *Status:* Technical assistance expertise will be conducted as needs are identified. Technical assistance opportunities such as expanding efforts with the Tribal colleges are being explored and efforts will begin during Q1 and Q2 2013.
- **Broadband Portal Development** *UNL*. Develop a central broadband portal which will serve as a source of information on broadband efforts in Nebraska. *Status*: Website officially launched in April 2012. In the first quarter, there were 700 unique visitors to the site with 2,228 unique visitors July-September 2012 and 1,621 unique visitors October-December, 2012. Visitors that did not bounce from page spent an average of 7 minutes at the site. Majority of visitors were seeking conference information, testing speed and going to the statewide map.

**Local and Regional Planning -** *$318,049 Direct; $394,177 Total Budget*
The Nebraska Broadband Local/Regional Technology Planning Teams program will augment regional planning approaches identified in the initial grant application with community planning, business and entrepreneurial discussions, government discussions, and agricultural discussions. Activities include:

- **Regional Planning Teams** *UNL.* Regional planning teams will be formed to create the regional plans. *Status:* Planning team members continue to be at varying stages as they move forward with broadband plans. Scholarships were offered through each of the regional groups to the annual conference. Highlights include:
  - North Central Region – Four focus groups held in region with broad representation including providers. Led to wide visibility in news and TV. Pulling information together for feedback with planning groups.
  - Northeast Region – Planning efforts in conjunction with the Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District continue. Focus group with ag producers held.
  - Western Region – Planning focus groups during Quarter 1 in region.
  - Southwest Region – As a result of interest in region, security was identified for a topic on upcoming webinar series and next step will be to develop one page summary sheets around security issues. Focus groups will be held in region in Q1.
  - New Frontier Region – Four focus groups were held during Q4 that led to a feature story on importance of broadband in the region. When communities had access to adequate broadband the conversation focused around education. When adequate broadband was not available, the conversation focused around efforts to get broadband to community.
  - Southeast and Central Region – Focus group held and goals in place to conduct several more across region. Technology education held throughout region using social media.

- ***Community Planning – North and South Omaha*** *UNL/AIM Institute in North and South Omaha.*  North and South Omaha were identified as underserved regions/areas through the survey of Nebraska households.  *Status:*  Efforts are moving forward in North/South Omaha. Key partners are being identified such as the Urban League, South Omaha Neighborhood Association, Omaha Chamber and libraries.  Identifying methods and organizations to provide a range of training opportunities to the target population is a goal of this planning effort.

- ***Community Planning - Cultural and Unserved Communities*** *UNL.*   Additional community or local planning teams in regions/areas identified as underserved through the survey of Nebraska households and broadband mapping data.  *Status:*  During Q4, the Nebraska Indian Community College (NICC) launched its radio station.  The opening of the radio station has created interest in utilizing broadband to deliver programming and connect with the three NICC campuses – in Macy (Omaha tribe), Santee (Santee & Sioux tribes) and an urban audience in South Sioux City.  The college is the primary location where people access the internet and is exploring with broadband planning cultural coach how to utilize technology to further the mission of education, healthy lifestyle and cultural.

- ***Focus Groups*** *UNL*. Seven to 10 focus groups will be held with anchor institutions and utility providers as well as populations with low usage rates.  *Status:*  Four focus groups were held in the New Frontier Planning region and one in the Southeast region.  Focus groups in these regions confirmed that broadband access has increased in the area primarily in the health industry and education.  Access continues to be a challenge in a number of areas.  Where there is access, communities are interested in exploring ways to increase utilization.  Where there is limited access or reliability, the conversation has focused on what a community needs to do to increase broadband.

- ***Community Sector Discussions*** *UNL*.   Community sector discussions will be held to further advance adoption of technology in specific industries such as business and entrepreneurs, chambers of commerce, agriculture and the health industry.  The focus of each discussion will be to benchmark technology use across the specific sectors, set goals for improved technology, and develop a plan to achieve goals.  *Status:*  The community sector discussions will begin in 2012 and conducted by UNL.  Reaching out to community sector groups such as Agriculture.  Workshop on broadband planning efforts will be held at annual NE Ag Technology Association meeting.

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